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I thought you might be interested in the latest developments regarding the Dominican Republic.

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Tourism Industry Sees Recovery After False Media Campaign

- Although both the U.S. State Department and the government of the Dominican Republic both agree that the tourism deaths earlier this year are unrelated, the country has established a National Committee of Tourism Security, which is composed of 16 essential government agencies, who will develop policies, strategies, and programs for the prevention and detection of threats to the country's security.
- Some of the steps the Committee has taken include: more thorough property and food inspection standards, better access to emergency information (911 procedures in every guest room and reviewed at check in), a new emergency tourist center (equipped with multi-lingual specialists to act as intermediaries between tourists, families, and the government), new training and certification for all Department of Tourism Services and Companies inspectors to improve the quality of water and hygiene measures, and the expansion of security forces (4000 new police and personnel) and an increase in urban surveillance (3000 new security cameras).
- U.S Ambassador to the Dominican Republic Robin Bernstein described the surge of negative articles about the country as an "unfounded negative campaign" and stated, "American tourists should feel safe and secure. I am totally comfortable with the safety level, it is one of the safest tourist destinations I have ever visited. In fact, it has now become an even safer place to come because of the initiatives."
- U.S. Ambassador Bernstein stated that the reports of tainted alcohol causing the tourist deaths was a false claim.
- The U.S. State Department has reiterated that there's been no uptick in the number of U.S. citizens deaths in the Dominican Republic.
- In 2017, 2.7 million U.S. tourists visited making it the fourth-most popular travel destination for U.S. tourists.
- In the first half of 2019, Expedia Group states that reservations to Puerto Plata have increased almost 10%, and of that 10% increase, 14% of those travelers are visitors from the U.S, while 5% of that increase can be attributed to Canadian travelers.
- The Dominican Republic is the most improved country in the tourism industry in the subregion, moving from 76th to 73rd on the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index.

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<http://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/09/12/1915180/0/en/Dominican-Republic-Minister-Of-Tourism-To-Address-Public-And-Present-Ongoing-Efforts-To-Safeguard-Tourists.html>
<https://www.foxnews.com/world/dominican-republic-safety-measures-tourist-deaths>
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The Dominican Republic & The U.S. Continue to Increase Relations

- Dominican President Medina sympathized with U.S. President Trump over the shootings that occurred in El Paso, Texas, and in Dayton, Ohio, stating, "...we convey our sorrow to the families of the victims and to all the people who were injured, for whose recovery we raise prayers".
- A Dominican Delegation traveled to Washington, D.C. for Dominican Week to promote its tourism industry which accounts for 17% of its GDP. They also promoted Semana Dominicana, which is a week-long event held in D.C. and NYC as an initiative to promote the Dominican Republic as a trade and investment destination.
- The U.S. Congress celebrated Dominican Week by founding a Dominican Caucus named "Caucus of the Group of Friends of the Dominican Republic", with those that joined the caucus reaffirming their commitment to strengthening relations between the Dominican Republic and the U.S.
- Dominican Republic Ambassador to the U.S. José Tomás Pérez, stated, "it is an act of great value to continue strengthening relations between our two countries." He reiterated that the Dominican Caucus will be a platform to advance certain projects in the U.S. Congress that will benefit the Dominican Republic in areas like trade, tourism, security, environment, and education.
- U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic Bernstein, made a visit to the facilities of Banilejas Industries to learn the details of the top 10 coffee producers in the Dominican Republic.

<https://acento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8713301-danilo-expresa-condolencias-a-trump-por-tirotes-en-eeuu/>
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Economy Sees Growth in New Areas

- The country's Free Zones celebrate their 50th year in operation, with 74 industrial parks and 705 companies generating more than 175,000 direct jobs and approximately 200,000 indirect jobs, the zones have led to the diversification of exports, jobs, and an influx in investment, contributing \$4.5 billion to the economy annually.
- The Dominican Republic has seen an average economic growth of 5.1% annually from 2008-2018, an average of 6.6% annual growth between 2014-2018, and growth of 7% in 2018.
- Automotive sales have become a large contributor to the Dominican Republic economy, with sales of \$2.4 billion annually, selling 20,000 new and 122,000 used vehicles, accounting for over \$2.35 billion in auto loans and over \$146 million in insurance policies.
- The Dominican Republic has exported \$500 million in organic products, with the greatest number of organic exports being bananas and cocoa.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/dominican-republic-free-zones-50-150000391.html>
<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9133380/the-dominican-republic-s-organic-product-exports-exceed-us-500-million/>
<https://dominicanotoday.com/dr/economy/2019/09/30/dominican-republics-autos-sector-tops-us-2-4b-in-sales/>

Dominican Government Works to Improve Quality of Life

- The Dominican AG Jean Alain Rodríguez, stressed that the country is increasing its fight against money laundering by focusing on in-depth training for people working in the system, enhancing investigative techniques, and strengthening relations between the Dominican Public Ministry and national and international organizations in relation to organized crime.
- The Judicial Branch Council established rules of ethical behavior for all judges, ensuring that transparency, equality, and impartiality are included in the Code of Ethical Behavior of the Dominican Judiciary, and ensuring this code of conduct will be carried out by members of the judicial system.
- The Centers for Diagnosis, Advanced Medicine, and Telemedicine launched a new Basic Preventive Plan, which offers a comprehensive health check with an internal medical exam and 16 analytical and imaging tests, including: blood tests, urine tests, EKGs, sugar level tests, and cholesterol and triglyceride tests. This new program will increase access to preventive check-ups and make health services available to everyone.
- The state health services recently registered 15,619 new healthcare employees, including: doctors (5,506), nurses (2,978), bio-analysts, pharmacists, X-ray technicians, psychologists, dentists, and hospital administrative staff.
- The Social Assistance Plan of the Presidency (PASP) delivered over 3,000 meals and

household utensils, provided dental care, and helped fix roofs in the country's most impoverished areas, as part of the "Plan in your Province" program that has helped over 6,000 people in need.

- The Ministry of Finance published a "Commitment to Citizen Letter", which explains how to request a service, carry out a procedure, explain current laws, regulations, and quality standards, while also providing a way for citizens to file complaints or offer suggestions and recommendations. This letter is part of a new initiative for the Ministry that is placing its citizens at the center of its policies and processes.
- The USDA-funded Safe Agriculture/Food Export (SAFE) project was created to improve the competitiveness of the country's beef and dairy industry, while increasing food safety and productivity in the agriculture and livestock markets.
- The Dominican Republic joined Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in a project to improve their Early Warning Systems (EWS) and ensure disaster risk reduction to natural disasters. The project will include sharing information, EWS roadmaps and actions plans, and the implementation of those plans.

<https://acento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8712730-procurador-republica-dominicana-se-prepara-para-enfrentar-con-mayor-eficiencia-el-lavado-de-activos/>
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<https://reliefweb.int/report/antigua-and-barbuda/strengthening-early-warning-systems-caribbean-south-south-cooperation>

Dominican Republic Lessens Its Environmental Impact

- The Dominican Republic is increasing efforts to meet its goal of having 25% of its power being produced from clean sources in 2019, on track to end the year with 604.6-MW of renewable energy capacity.
- The Dominican Republic joins eight other Latin American countries in a pact to have set a collective target of 70% renewable energy use by 2030.
- The country currently produces 402.4-MW of renewable energy and will have three new wind farms totaling 144-MW and two new PV parks totaling 75-MW put into service by the end of 2019.
- Currently the country is producing 88-MW of solar energy annually.
- The Dominican Republic has granted 8 provisional concessions for a combined 774MW of solar energy. In addition to signing a concession for a 100-MW project, and authorizing studies for a planned 50-MW plant.
- The new Caribbean Wind Farm PECASA will contribute 50-MW to the national electric system.
- The new Washington Capital Solar Park will produce 50-MW of solar power by the end of the year, and eventually producing 110-GWh per year.
- The new Matafongo Wind Farm will contribute 34-MW, supplying more than 30,000 homes with electricity.
- The Dominican Republic ranks among the top 3 improvers in the World Energy Trilemma Index.

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<https://dominicanatoday.com/dr/local/2019/09/21/usa-will-finance-study-to-create-natural-gas-plant-in-monte-cristi/>
<https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/business/678917-nowadays-we-have-more-diversified-sources-of-energy-antonio-isa-conde>

President Medina Takes on Educational Reform

- The Board of Education received over \$655 million from the federal government to be used in 7,800 Regional Centers and School Boards for school maintenance, ensuring schools are in optimal condition for the 2019-2020 school year.
- President Medina has provided funding for 1,180 new educational centers for the extended coursework program, adding 20,203 new classrooms to ensure no child is left out of the classroom. This has impacted an enrollment of 638,295 students, 75% of which are enrolled in the extended coursework program.

<https://acento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8713111-juntas-de-centros-regionales-y-de-distritos-reciben-mas-de-rd655-millones-del-ministerio-de-educacion/>
<https://acento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8716970-ministro-de-educacion-gobierno-ha-construido-1180-centros-escolares-que-aportan-20203-nuevas-aulas/>

Women Become a Priority in the Dominican Republic

- The Ministry of Women saved 652 lives and rescued 5,477 women from domestic violence between January and June 2019, thanks to calls received to its toll-free women's safety hotline. It provided these women with protection, legal guidance, and psychological

counseling in its shelters.

- The Ministry of Women is working with international and civil organizations to help spread awareness of domestic violence and violence against women, and to help educate women and men on how to prevent ending up in a violent situation.
- The Gender Equality Observatory of the Ministry of Women offered legal and psychological services to 28,236 women in need, in the first 6-months of 2019.
- In Prosecutor Francisco Ledesma's first year in his role at the Public Ministry, acts of gender violence decreased by 30%, which he attributes to his war on crime (crackdowns of certain gambling systems, raids on bars, and a focus on ending human trafficking).
- Since its formation last May, the National Alliance, composed of public and private institutions, and international and civil organizations, has already decreased maternal mortality by 21% and neonatal mortality by 28%.
- The Ministry of Public Health is expanding the National Alliance's strategy to reduce maternal and neonatal deaths by providing prenatal information and prenatal health care to pregnant women in the most impoverished parts of the country.
- A Santo Domingo hospital has doubled its efforts to stress the importance of prenatal checkups and provide prenatal care information to pregnant women, an effort to help detect diseases, complications, and prevent neonatal and maternal deaths.
- The Ministry of Women held an event to help promote gender equality, provide information on female education and health, encourage economic empowerment, and provide information on domestic violence and information on how to receive help for those who need it.
- The Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico signed a collaboration agreement to prevent violence against women, and work together to share information, research results, relevant data, and implementation of initiatives.

<https://acento.com.do/2019/salud/8711459-chequeos-prenatales-son-prioridad-del-hmra-para-prevenir-muerte-materna-y-neonatal/>
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<https://acento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8731769-fiscal-de-santiago-destaca-en-ultimo-ano-han-disminuido-hechos-violentos/>

The Dominican Government Furtheres Its Bilateral Relations

- The Dominican Government sent humanitarian aid to the Abaco Island, which was devastated by hurricane Dorian. The relief efforts included: 34 tons of food and medicine, clothes, water, aid workers for debris removal, doctors, rescue specialists, and search and canine units.
- The Dominican Republic and India signed a visa waiver agreement that allows its citizens to travel to the other country for 90 days without having a visa. The two countries also discussed increasing bilateral relations, especially in the areas of trade and renewable energy.
- Haiti and the Dominican Republic signed a MoU to formalize their collaboration and cooperation to promote the development of both nations.
- Ghana and the Dominican Republic have signed an agreement to strengthen bilateral and economic cooperation, specifically in the areas of tourism, investment, trade and supporting each other at a multilateral level.

<https://acento.com.do/2019/actualidad/8729361-r-dominicana-envia-ayuda-y-unidades-militares-de-rescate-a-las-bahamas/>
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<https://mobile.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-Dominican-Republic-relations-Countries-strengthen-bilateral-and-economic-cooperation-783611>

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